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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted of the perceived training needs and the importance of these needs for job effectiveness of urban extension agents working with disadvantaged audiences. The questionnaire was based largely on nine general areas of competency. Most of the respondents were younger than 35 and had less than 5 years' experience. Among the training needs they perceived were technical knowledge; effective use of radio, photographs, telephone, personal letters, television and newsletters; understanding why people join organizations and the purposes of various agencies serving the disadvantaged; understanding the relationship of daydreaming to creative thinking; understanding the implications of the rapidly changing population trends; how to develop a long-range extension program plan; how to develop an approach sensitive to the disadvantaged; programs on career exploration and development; how to interpret results of research in the physical sciences; and understanding of how the extension service is organized. (KM)

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PERCEIVED TRAINING NEEDS OF URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES *

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USDA-ES Study

INTRODUCTION

4-H agents have been challenged to shift programs and methods to meet changing needs of society. A large percentage of the American people are living in urban areas and many of these concentrated populations exhibit the paramount problems of poverty. In the United States today there is the science, technology, and economic capacity to abolish human poverty. The Cooperative Extension Service is an important part of this capacity and must assist society in eliminating this culture of deprivation.

It would be absurd to assume that Cooperative Extension is going toreach the urban disadvantaged with the 4-H staff of yesterday or today. Advance training, continuous in-service training, and the recognition of training needs are indispensable ingredients for successful progress.

This report will focus upon the factors relating to 4-H agents' training status and the perceived importance of and training needed of selected areas of competency.

METHODOLOGY

The overall design for this study consisted of the development and utilization of mail questionnaires for describing the perceived training needs and the importance of these needs for job effectiveness of urban Extension agents working with disadvantaged audiences in the 12 Northeastern States.

The design of the questionnaire was based largely upon the nine areas of competency identified by the National In-Service Training Task Force of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association. These areas of competency include:

1. Extension Organization and Administration
2. Communications
3. Social Systems
4. Effective Thinking
5. Human Development
6. Educational Process
7. Program Planning and Development
8. Technical Knowledge
9. Research and Evaluation

Specific items were developed for each of the nine general areas. The items were arranged in random order with a scale from 5 to 1 placed on each item as to "importance" and "training needed".

State directors of Extension in each of the 12 States identified agents working with urban disadvantaged audiences and the survey was conducted in the fall of 1970.

Although this study included agents with all divisional responsibilities (163) only the needs of 4-H agents (60) will be presented in this report.

TABLE 1

TENURE OF 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED

Tenure Years	Youth 4-H Division	
	Number	Percent
Less that 1	16	27.1
1 to 5	19	32.2
5 to 10	10	16.9
11 to 15	7	11.9
16 to 20	2	3.4
21 or more	5	8.5
TOTAL	59	100.0

Table 1 indicated that 59.3% of the 4-H agents working with urban disadvantaged audiences have less than five years' Tenure in the Cooperative Extension Service.

TABLE 2

AGE OF 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH
URBAN DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Age	Number	Percent
20 - 24	12	20.3
25 - 29	14	23.7
30 - 34	7	11.9
35 - 39	2	3.4
40 - 44	7	11.9
45 - 49	8	13.6
50 - 54	5	8.5
55 - 59	3	5.1
60 - 64	1	1.7
65 +	-	-

Table 2 shows that 55.9% of 4-H agents working with urban disadvantaged audiences are less than 35 years of age with 44% less than 30 years of age.

TABLE 3

SEX OF 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH URBAN
DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Sex	Number	Percent
Male	26	44.1
Female	33	55.9

Table 3 shows that there are slightly more female 4-H agents with urban disadvantaged audiences.

TABLE 4

EXPERIENCE OF URBAN 4-H AGENTS IN WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES IN THE EXTENSION SERVICE

Years of Experience	Number	Percent
Less than 1	18	31.0
1 to less than 5	29	50.0
5 to less than 10	7	12.1
10 or more	4	6.9
TOTAL	58	100.0

Table 4 indicates that 81% of 4-H agents working with urban disadvantaged audiences have less than five years' experience with this clientele within the Cooperative Extension Service.

TABLE 5

EXPERIENCE OF URBAN 4-H AGENTS IN WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES IN OTHER AGENCIES

Years of Experience	Number	Percent
Less than 1	-	-
1 to less than 5	6	10.0
5 to less than 10	2	3.3
10 or more	4	6.7
None	48	80.0
TOTAL	60	100.0

Table 5 shows that 80% of the urban 4-H agents working with disadvantaged audiences have no experience with this audience in other agencies.

TABLE 6

DEGREES EARNED BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Bachelor's Degree		Master's Degree	
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
45	75.0	15	25.0

TABLE 7

MAJOR FIELDS OF EDUCATION OF URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Major Field of Education	Number	Percent
Education	32	53.3
General Home Economics	11	18.3
Production Subject Matter	8	13.3
Biological Sciences	3	5.0
Social Science	6	10.0
TOTAL	60	

Table 7 indicates that over ½ (53.3%) of urban 4-H agents working with disadvantaged audiences have an educational major field of education.

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TIME SPENT BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS IN WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Percent of Time Spent	Number	Percent
10 - 19	15	25.0
20 - 29	15	25.0
30 - 39	4	6.7
40 - 49	2	3.3
50 - 59	3	5.0
60 - 69	3	5.0
70 - 79	-	-
80 - 89	2	3.3
90 - 99	4	6.7
100	12	20.0

Table 8 illustrates a wide range of urban 4-H agents' total time spent with disadvantaged audiences. 50% of the 4-H agents spend less than 1/3 of their time with this clientele while 20% spend 100% of their time with urban disadvantaged clientele.

TABLE 9

PERCENTAGE OF TIME URBAN 4-H AGENTS SPEND IN SPECIFIED SIZES OF CITIES IN WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Size of Cities	10-100,000		250,000 +		250,000 +	
Percent of Time	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 25	2	3.8	-	-	1	10.0
25 to less than 50	3	5.8	4	40.0	3	30.0
50 to less than 75	5	9.6	2	20.0	-	-
75 to less than 100	-	-	1	10.0	1	10.0
100	42	80.8	3	30.0	5	50.0
TOTAL	52	100.0		100.0	10	100.0

Table 9 indicates that most of the efforts by urban 4-H agents working with disadvantaged audiences are in cities with populations of 10-100,000.

Summary of Situational Data: (Urban 4-H Agents Working with Disadvantaged Audiences)

1. 59.3% have less than 5 years' tenure in the Cooperative Extension Service
2. 55.9% are less than 35 years of age with 44% less than 30 years of age
3. There are slightly more females than males -- 55.9%
4. 81% have less than 5 years' experience with disadvantaged with Cooperative Extension Service
5. 80% have had no experience with disadvantaged with other agencies
6. 25% have Master degrees
7. 53.3% have education as their major field of education
8. 50% spend less than 1/3 of their time with urban disadvantaged audiences
9. Most of the urban disadvantaged work is conducted in cities with 10-100,000 population

PERCEIVED TRAINING NEEDS

The following tables illustrate the perceived importance and training needs of the nine general areas of training and the specific items within each area of competency. The items were rank ordered on the basis of mean weighted scores obtained from the 4-H agent respondents in the study.

TABLE 10
RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF GENERAL AREA OF TRAINING BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

General Area of Training	Importance	Training Needed
Communications	1	1
Social systems	3.5	5
Effective thinking	5.5	4
Program Planning and development	3.5	3
Human Development	2	2
The educational process	7	6
Technical knowledge	5.5	9
Research; principles and evaluation	8	7
Extension organication and administration	9	8

Comparison between Importance and Training Needs
4-H Agents .80

TABLE 11

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF COMMUNICATION BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Communication: Basic Communication Individual, Group and Mass Media With Disadvantaged Audiences	Importance	Training Needed
Understanding the basic principles of communication with the disadvantaged.	1	1
How to use visual aids in teaching the disadvantaged.	2	4
How to conduct effective home visits with the disadvantaged.	3	6
Understanding the relationship between group processes and communication.	4	2
How to make my public speaking more effective with the disadvantaged.	6	7
How to develop and use exhibits effectively with the disadvantaged.	5	5
How to write effective reports to promote this non-traditional program.	7	3
How to use circular letters effectively with the disadvantaged.	9	8
How to write effective news articles which recognize appropriate achievements.	8	9
How to use Newsletters effectively and efficiently.	10	10
How to use radio effectively and efficiently.	14	14
How to use photographs effectively in extension communication	12	12
Knowledge of the techniques in making office calls efficient and effective.	13	15
How to write effective personal letters to the disadvantaged.	11	13
How to use television effectively and efficiently.	15	11

Comparison between Importance and Training Needs-- rho
4-H Agents .90

TABLE 12

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Social Systems: Family, Community, School, Special Interest Groups, etc. in Disadvantaged Areas	Importance	Training Needed
Understanding the lower class socio-economic concepts--employment, housing conditions, values, desires.	1	3
Knowledge of how to identify leadership in disadvantaged areas.	2	1
Understanding the family system in disadvantaged areas (parental roles, aspiration, kinship).	6	6
Understanding the concepts of minority group subcultures (Ethnic and Racial).	3	5
Understanding the purpose of the various public agencies serving the disadvantaged and their relationship to extension.	9	11
Understanding the interactions of individuals in groups.	8	10
Understanding the patterns of interdependence of the various groups in disadvantaged areas.	4.5	2
Understanding the community organization in disadvantaged areas.	4.5	4
Understanding the effect and characteristics of the informal leader in the acceptance of new practices in disadvantaged areas.	7	8
Understanding the effect of changing social values on family life in my county (acceptance of middle class values).	10	7
Understanding the functions of organizations in disadvantaged urban life.	11	9
Understanding why people join groups and organizations.	12	12

Comparison between Importance and Training Needed--rho
4-H Agents .87

TABLE 13

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS ON EFFECTIVE THINKING BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Effective Thinking: Problem Solving Methods, Decision Making Based on Critical Analysis, Creativity in Working with Disadvantaged Aud.	Importance	Training Needed
Understanding the effect of prejudice on the thinking process of the disadvantaged.	1	1
Understanding the effect of pressure groups in the thinking process of the disadvantaged.	2	2
Knowledge of the principles of creative thinking for working with disadvantaged audiences.	3	3
How to use the problem solving approach in Extension work.	7	7
Understanding the relationship of the problem solving method to effective thinking.	4	8
Understanding the relation of language (terms used) to the thinking process.	5	5
Understanding the role of Extension workers in predicting probable future results from existing facts.	6	6
Knowledge of techniques for developing effective thinking in Extension groups.	9	4
Understanding the relationship of day-dreaming to creative thinking.	10	10
Understanding the processes of logical reasoning.	8	9

Comparison between Importance and Training Needed--rho
4-H Agents .74

TABLE 14

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Program Planning and Development with Disadvantaged Audiences	Importance	Training Needed
How to determine what programs are appropriate for disadvantaged audiences.	3	3.5
What resources are available in the state, county, and local areas fro programs with the disadvantaged.	4	8
How to analyze the relevant needs of the disadvantaged in my county.	1	2
How to identify and involve "lay" people in program development.	2	3.5
How to build an integrate county program, disadvantaged and traditional.	5	5
How to build evaluation procedures into program plans for the disadvantaged.	10	1
How to identify problems in the county situations and determine the priority of problems.	8	10
Where and how to start a program for the disadvantaged.	7	9
Understanding the proper role I should assume with program planning committees in disadvantaged areas.	6	6
How to organize effective program planning committees	9	7
How to determine priority objectives of the county program.	12	13
How to use state and other agency specialists in program development.	11	12
Understanding the implications of the rapidly changing population trends.	14	14.5
How to develop people's understanding of the county situation.	13	11
How to develop a long range Extension program plan.	15	14.5

Comparison between Importance and Training Needed--rho

4-H Agents .79

TABLE 15

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Human Development: i.e., Development Process of Disadvantaged People, Group Interaction Principles	Importance	Training Needed
How to train indigenous disadvantaged leaders.	3	2
How to maintain effective indigenous leadership in disadvantaged areas.	1	1
Knowledge of the attitudes and values held by disadvantaged people.	2	5
Understanding the basic psychological drives of disadvantaged people, such as the need for recognition and security.	4	7
Understanding the factors affecting the behavior of disadvantaged people.	6	4
How to develop an approach to Extension work that considers the feeling and values of the disadvantaged people served by the program.	8	11
Understanding the factors affecting personality development in urban disadvantaged people.	5	3
How to develop my own leadership abilities in working with disadvantaged.	9	6
Understanding why disadvantaged people have certain goals in life.	7	8.5
Understanding the role and training of paid indigenous sub-professionals in disadvantaged areas.	10	10
Knowledge of the principles and techniques in effective counseling.	12	8.5
Understanding the reasons for aggressive behavior.	13	12
Understanding the developmental process of boys and girls.	11	13

Comparison between Importance and Training Needs--rho

4-H Agents .82

TABLE 16

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

The Educational Process: Principles of Learning; Teaching Methods and Philosophy of Education for Disadvantaged Audiences	Importance	Training Needed
Understanding how to motivate disadvantaged people.	1	1
Understanding how disadvantaged people learn.	2	3
Understanding of where the individual is in his readiness to learn.	5	5
How to develop and use teaching methods with the disadvantaged.	3	2
Knowledge of the principles and procedure in teaching disadvantaged adults.	4	4
Understanding the relationship of interest to learning.	7	9
Understanding the relationship of experience to learning with the disadvantaged.	6	6
Understanding the effect of the differences in individuals on the teaching learning process.	8	7
Understanding the concepts of group dynamics.	9	8
Understanding the relationships between the need for and usefulness of subject matter information to learning.	11	10
Understanding the relationship of learning to what we perceive through our senses.	10	11
Understanding the philosophies of education.	12	12
Knowledge of the background and history of education.	13	13

Comparison between Importance and Training Needs--rho

4-H Agents .98

TABLE 17

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Technical Knowledge: Subject Matter Agriculture, Home Economics and Related Sciences in Working with Disadvantaged Audiences	Importance	Training Needed
Knowledge and skills in working with disadvantaged (understanding values, interests, desires, etc.).	1	4
Programs which are of interest to urban disadvantaged audiences.	2	2
Understanding effective methods of using our professional time with the disadvantaged.	5	6
Knowledge and understanding of what other agencies do and how we can cooperate effectively and efficiently.	6	10
Family oriented programs and activities for the urban disadvantaged.	4	3
Knowledge of how to obtain additional resources for disadvantaged programs.	8	7
Creative ideas to stimulate and maintain interest in Extension programs.	7	6
Understanding of effective recognition programs for the disadvantaged.	9	9
Knowledge of how to write effective proposals for possible funding.	10	8
Programs on career exploration and development.	11	11
Methods and guides for indigenous leaders training.	3	1

Comparison between Importance and Training Needs--rho
4-H Agents .82

TABLE 18

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Research: Principles of Research and Evaluation: Methods of Utilizing Research Findings with Disadvantaged Audiences	Importance	Training Needed
Knowledge of the methods for measuring results of programs with the disadvantaged.	1	2
Understanding ways of designing evaluation projects with disadvantaged audiences.	2	1
How to use the experimental approach (pilot programs) in Extension work.	3	3
How to make the best use of research publications for use with the disadvantaged.	4	4
Understanding the role of investigation in solving problems with people.	5	5
Knowledge of where to secure second research information other than from experiment stations.	7	8
Making application of research finding in assisting people in my county and state.	6	6
How to develop simple survey devices.	8	7
How to interpret the results of research in the social sciences.	9	9
Understanding how to interpret statistical results.	10	10
Understanding research terminology.	11	11
How to interpret results of research in the physical sciences.	12	12

Comparison between Importance and Training Needs--rho

4-H Agents .99

TABLE 19

RANK CORRELATION OF AGENTS PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND TRAINING NEEDS OF EXTENSION ORGANIZATION BY DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY URBAN 4-H AGENTS WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED AUDIENCES

Extension Organization and Administration in Relationship to Disadvantage Audiences	Importance	Training Needed
Knowledge of the existing policies in the state Extension Service--paid aides cooperating with other agencies, program priorities, etc.	1	1
Knowledge of professional improvement opportunities.	2	2
Understanding functions and responsibilities of Extension workers at the county level.	3	6
Understanding the functions and responsibilities of the specialist staff.	4	4
Understanding Extension philosophy (A People and A Spirt).	5	8
Understanding principles and procedures in Office management.	7	3
Knowledge of priorities placed on audiences at the Federal and State level.	6	5
Understanding Extension policies and procedures on promotion, salary adjustment, performance appraisal.	10	10
Understanding functions and responsibilities of Extension workers at the State level.	8	12
Understanding how policies are formulated in the State Extension Service.	11	7
Knowledge of the organ and function of the Extension Service at the Federal level.	12	11
Understanding the recruitment process in the Extension Service in my state.	9	9
Understanding retirement and insurance policies and procedures.	16	13
Knowledge of qualifications for Extension personnel at all levels of Extension Service.	13	14
Understanding of how the Extension Service is organized.	14	16

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